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ABSTRACT

This journal presents a forum for discussion and research related to correctional education programs and their effects on students. This inaugural issue contains the following articles: (1) "The Position of Correctional Education in the Current Crime Dilemma," by the editors, describing problems currently facing correctional administrators and key issues related to program improvement; (2) "An Abstract: Personality Characteristics of Teachers Working in Washington State Correctional Institutions," by John O. Larsgaard, Lillian F. Lauer, and Charles E. Kelso, Jr., reviewing the age, length of service, contact hours per week, and self-assessments of personality traits of 90 correctional educators in Washington; (3) "A Study of the Recidivism of Garrett Heyns Education Center (GHEC) Graduates Released between 1985 and 1991," by Charles Kelso, finding that the recidivism rate for the GHEC graduates after 5 years was 13.9%, compared to 30.9% statewide; (4) "An Analysis of Recidivism Rates for Inmates Completing Vocational/Academic Programs at Twin Rivers Corrections Center/Edmonds Community College (1984-1995)," by Jerry Haynes, reporting a 9.1% recidivism rate for associate degree graduates and a 14.8% rate for certificate holders; (5) "An Open Letter: A Curriculum Guide for Correctional Educators," describing training requirements for potential correctional educators; and (6) "Civilizing the Visigoths: Education in a Prison Classroom," by Warren L. Clare, describing the role of education in the correctional environment and the importance of treating prisoners with sensitivity and respect. (HAA)

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THE JOURNAL

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Northwest Center FOR THE Study OF Correctional Education

Volume 1

JC 960 461

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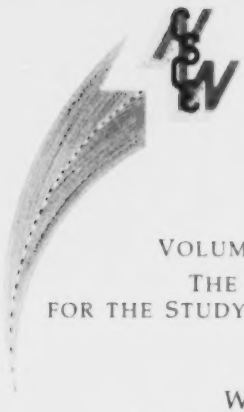
THE JOURNAL

FROM THE NORTHWEST CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF
CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

Learning and behavioral change are both dependent upon a close interpersonal relationship between student and teacher.
—January, 1996



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THE NORTHWEST CENTER
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The Journal from the Northwest Center for the Study of Correctional Education is an annual publication of articles and research dedicated to discussions of correctional educational programs and their influences upon the lives of the men and women in the classroom.

The purpose of *The Journal* is the medium of publication for all students, scholars and writers interested in the issues and problems of correctional education.

Manuscripts may be submitted to Warren L. Clare, The Garrett Heyns Education Center, P.O. Box 900, Shelton, Washington 98584.

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From the Desk of Dr. Henry P. Kirk
President, Centralia College

Welcome to the first issue of *The Journal* from the N.W. Center for Correctional Education.

Correctional education in Washington has a long and interesting history of which all Washingtonians can be proud. Administratively, it has progressed from in-house institutional programs to a network of comprehensive educational curricula sponsored by Washington Community and Technical Colleges.

Correctional educational programs constitute a form of privatization which is strongly supportive of academic ingenuity and creativity in program development. Hopefully, the day will come when budgeting for the several schools will also be coordinated with the Community College System thus permitting the full advantage to the schools in long-range planning and program enhancement.

But administrative considerations represent only one of many delightful developments in this educational effort. The sophistication of staff, many of whom have served long tenures in the program, has offered the offender a matured leadership in both the educational process as well as in the presentation of personality patterns to be emulated in making certain changes much needed for the offenders' future happiness and for the protection of the public. Evidence of the overall rehabilitative success of the correctional education programming in Washington is seen in the markedly reduced recidivism rate of former students as compared with the rate which applies to the population in general. In parallel with the excitement derived from the very favorable recidivism rate are the communications from hundreds upon hundreds of individuals who

attend the program or graduate from it while incarcerated. Their letters, while usually asking for transcripts which will enable them to continue their educational pursuits, also reveal their progress and successes in every walk of life.

One of the unfortunate aspects of programming in the correctional arenas is the fact that the taxpayers who finance all educational endeavors do not have the opportunity to learn of the good which comes from their investment in correctional education. They are entitled to know. Hopefully, *The Journal* will assist in this area.

While *The Journal* is a project of the Garrett Heyns Educational Center and Centralia College, there is no desire to approach the mission of publication with exclusivity in mind. Instead, it is the hope that all correctional schools (in Washington and beyond) will feel free to use *The Journal* as a communications tool for staff, students and all interested parties.

While some might argue that there is no need for another journal "to clutter the library shelves," we, at the GHEC and the Centralia College, sincerely hope the techniques and philosophies presented in these pages, and in those of succeeding editions, will be of help in the upgrading of this aspect of public education and that interested parties will experience hope and satisfaction in what is being accomplished. "Come, join in and make certain that the world knows of these public-supported efforts to fight the crime problem in our country."

—Dr. Henry P. Kirk
President, Centralia College

The Journal is financed by private funds. Contributions can be made through the Centralia College Foundation, Centralia, Washington 98531. Staff at the Center and the College are available to respond to inquiries about work being done and in the reporting thereof.

The Position of Correctional Education in the Current Crime Dilema

The Editors

INTRODUCTION

Correctional administrators today are faced with (at least) three monumental problems. Specifically:

- The ever increasing population in the correctional settings.
- The shortages across the board occasioned by the increasing populations and budgetary restrictions.
- The anger of an understandably frustrated society demanding harsh punitive approaches to incarcerated offenders which is bringing about a deterioration or even a loss of established and effective rehabilitative programs.

As the crime problem has intensified across the country, more individuals have been admitted to the corrections system to the point that at this time there may be one and a half million individuals behind bars in the United States. Adequate cell space is not available with the result that overcrowding is the rule. Prisons are under construction, or on the drawing boards, in one state after another and dollars otherwise available for services are being diverted into capital construction.

Money shortages in service areas together with the increasing demands created by the larger institution populations bring about an increase in the client to staff ratio. Staff at every level becomes absorbed in time management and in stretching available services rather than enhancing service delivery.

But, money and the assignment of staff are not the only issues facing the correctional administrator today. Although

not usually understood, there remains operational in any organization strongly influenced by its traditional past, individuals and groups that would enjoy a return to the "old way of doing things." This resistance movement in corrections has always been strong and is responsible for the slow rate of progress made in the field over the past century. The "resistance movement" still exists in many modern correctional programs and stands prepared to take its cue from whatever influential forces are at play. Generally speaking, those who support previous and non-rehabilitative approaches are most pleased when they find support for their obstructive approach toward whatever progress has been made or is anticipated.

Frightening, indeed, is the possibility that the anger so openly expressed by the public at large could spark a new wave of resistance within the correctional programs thereby adding to the problems faced by the correctional administrator.

It goes without saying that the in-house skepticism in some correctional programs today runs a parallel course with the position held in high regard by many taxpayers who pay the bills. Both groups are inclined to think more in terms of punishment and both hold the firm conviction that rehabilitation of the offender is not a viable possibility.

Credit where credit is due: Both groups may well believe that their positions are in the best interest of the offender, since their thinking has emerged from long-standing misinterpretations of rehabilitation and/or their experience with negative results which understandably have occurred in even the most competent of rehabilitative efforts.

The failure to support and an unwillingness to enhance rehabilitative efforts is, of course, not in the interest of the public. The protection of the public is dependent upon changing the attitude and behavior of the offender; it is dependent on the rehabilitation of the offender.

Viewed in the perspective of dollar shortages, increasing

demands for service and the openly expressed anger from a number of sources, there can be only one clear-cut conclusion: Programs that have been helpful to the offender and are in the best interests of the public are viewed as progressive developments and subject to diminution, if not obliteration.

Correctional education, while not a new program, has been the beneficiary of a step by step upgrading. Beginning in most instances as a school under the auspices of correctional administrators, it later was a service and responsibility delegated to local public schools. The ultimate in advanced administrative management was coincidental with the development of comprehensive service community colleges in many states when prison programs were placed under the jurisdiction of these institutions of higher learning. Although the community colleges and the prisons are both sponsored by state government, this more recent step provided correctional education with a degree of privatization strongly supportive of academic freedom for staff, a quality not of interest in the earlier administrative structures.

Correctional education programs would appear to be particularly vulnerable when considered in the light of the "cutback" attitude. The reasons for such vulnerability, real or imagined, come from a number of sources. In one instance, there is a lack of understanding in the public at large as to how successful these programs have been in the rehabilitation of the offender and in the reduction in the recidivism rate. Further, there has been a tendency on the part of some to minimize the quality of the programs. One public official referred to correctional education as "a Mickey Mouse affair."

One might also surmise that the teaching program operating with a low student-teacher ratio is viewed as an "unnecessary expense." This position becomes particularly intense when anger influences the budgetary decision making.

What Other Program Enhancement Could be Threatened or Lost in the Shuffle?

The answer to this lead question is that many improvements in the field of corrections developed over the past quarter century could disappear in the struggle for saving dollars in association with the open expression of the public's anger.

It would seem appropriate to review other positive changes in corrections which have taken place in the past quarter century. For example, cruel and inhumane treatment along with abusive language directed toward residents of the institutions is no longer tolerated. The payoff in this regard is an enhancement in the human dignity of the offender, an experience to which many have not been exposed prior to their incarceration, but one which is essential for growth and development.

Further, attention has been given to maintaining communications with family via visitation, use of telecommunications and extended family visits. Offenders need to discover the satisfactions of assuming a personal responsibility for those they love and who love them.

Medical, recreational and social services have been more readily available presenting the individual with another approach to constructive patterns of living.

And work! The enhancement of institutions' industries and the involvement of private manufacturers operating behind prison walls and employing resident labor have struck a note of realism into such programming.

These developments, hard to institute and often difficult to maintain, should remain forever a part of the totality of correctional rehabilitative services. They are, nonetheless threatened in the chaos in which the corrections field is caught up at the moment. Each of these program enhancements is significant and their loss or diminishment would be most unfortunate.

A Hope for the Future: Enhancement of Correctional Education Programs

The public, generally, is at a disadvantage since citizens have no way of knowing that rehabilitation of many offenders is a possibility. Rehabilitation efforts have never been fully implemented and those which have approached implementation lack documentation of their successes. Thus, there is insufficient information available to show how the public can be better protected and how offenders can be helped to change their ways. This unfortunate situation is particularly true with correctional education. Herein lies the justification for publications such as this.

It stands to reason that angry feelings held so tenaciously by the general public will not disappear from the scene in any magical way. The crime problem, unabated as it is, will keep that anger alive. This is, of course, understandable.

It is equally understandable that resistance groups, at every level of staff within corrections, will not suddenly become interested in reforms. Consequently, they are less likely to be concerned about the development of the residents in their care.

Valued and time-honored programs offer hope for the incarcerated and add to the protection of the public. These programs should be maintained or enhanced in spite of the many problems they experience on a day-to-day basis.

This ambition does not imply that the educational programs can be all things to all people. Nor does it imply that there need be any competition between valuable assets in the programs. Instead, the reader is left to ponder the advantages offered by correctional education as a part of the totality of services offered.

Some Things to Remember

- Correctional educators are teachers; theirs is a giving profession. They are in the field because they have a sense that giving to others is the highest calling.
- The ability to accept the behavior of others is either inborn or developed via training; perhaps it is derived from a recognition that accepting others as they are is an essential credential for the teaching profession which makes possible the growth and development of students.
- All educators recognize that students emulate their leadership. Thus, a "good teacher" is a good role model, one with those characteristics that the angry and disenfranchised can learn from and follow.
- The ambition of the teacher is to guide, help mold and support in non-demeaning ways. The teacher holds no goal for guarding and controlling others.
- The teacher recognizes that a close communication and personal involvement in the care of students is essential to the learning process. There is no need to shun or rebuke the student.
- Correctional education is a unique service in the corrections arena. It provides an academic curriculum and offers instruction in the development of vocational skills. In so doing, there emerges a relationship between teacher and student upon which personality change and behavior modification is built. The end result of such programming is one which enhances the employability of the student and leads to a more appropriate relationship with others. Under such conditions, the public is better protected.

- The teacher in correctional education is a staff member of an academic institution, i.e., a privatized service (in a sense) in which academic freedom in the approach to the student is the reality. The teacher has no interest in the whim of the special interest group or the philosophical approach of the angry.

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An Abstract: Personality Characteristics of Teachers Working in Washington State Correctional Institutions

John O. Larsgaard, Ph.D.[1]
Lillian F. Lauer, Ph.D.[2]
Charles E. Kelso, Jr., M.Ed.[3]

FORWARD

Although the debate over the value of schools for the incarcerated has subsided, there remain in the minds of many, questions about the individuals who teach in these programs and who, many times, devote their entire professional careers to such endeavors.

The question is an interesting one and subject to interpretation via the perspective of the individuals who ask it. Those who are strong believers in the educational and therapeutic value of the educational process look with admiration toward those who devote their efforts to this phase of rehabilitation.

On the other hand, individuals who are less convinced of the value of the school programs, or who hold a punitive resentment toward the offender, are sometimes inclined to view correctional educators with derision. Their question concerning "who these people are" might be paraphrased to inquire, "Who in the world are these people and why would they waste their talents in working with those whose behavior has not met acceptable social standards?"

Reviews of the literature from time *in memoriam* have produced a vast amount of information on both the theory and practicum of the instructional process. The findings of

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such research need not be reviewed here; in fact, the volume of such material would make even a summary statement impractical.

There are, however, a few points of particular significance in the context of this Journal's interest which represent conclusions of research or of the personal observations of many over the years of their experience. These bear repeating here in an amplification of the basic question asked concerning who the teachers in correctional education really are. For example:

- It is well-established that the extent of the learning of any student is directly related to the quality of relationship between the student and the instructor.
- Teachers are leadership persons and may provide, through their own personality and enthusiasm, a powerful motivation for change.
- Teaching is a giving profession. Learning requires accepting that which is given.
- All educational endeavors are more effective when the teaching takes place in a warm and mutually respectful atmosphere; i.e., in a caring environment.

Viewed in the light of the above-noted indisputable conclusions, the question about "Who are these people who teach in correctional education" stimulates still further inquiry into their makeup. Given that individuals who come into the correctional setting as inmates are frightened and/or angry, relationships with teachers must be viewed as difficult to establish. Further, many of those incarcerated are distrustful. To see their instructors as giving or caring is a concept not easily accepted.

And, finally, to expect the correctional setting generally,

to be one encompassing a respectful and caring atmosphere would, indeed, require some unusual talents for all who are behind the walls.

It was with this background and the persistent question concerning who the correctional educators really are, that a research program was instituted in the fall of 1993.

The study, financed by private funds with its testing accomplished in the off-duty hours of the correctional educators, was under the leadership of two psychologists and one correctional instructor with many years of research, clinical practice and teaching experience behind them. The study was endorsed by the Washington Community College District Twelve Board of Trustees and by the Washington Correctional Education Association. It had the full participation of all adult prison educational programs within Washington State. The scientific report of the study is being prepared for submission to *The Journal of Correctional Education*, the international organ of communication for correctional educators.

What follows here is an abstract, a summary of sorts, prepared for distribution without further delay, in the hope that participants in the study as well as all interested individuals may learn by way of this publication of the interesting findings which have evolved. There is a compilation of all of the data from this study at the Garrett Heyns Education Center (GHEC) and it is available for those who are interested.

Introduction and Purpose

There is a remarkable cadre of teachers working in correctional institutions across the nation. These instructors teach in a variety of settings from city and county jails, juvenile rehabilitation centers, reformatories, work camps, to state and federal prisons. Their organization is the International Correctional Education Association (ICEA), and their professional publication, *The Journal of Correctional Education*, is in

its forty-third year and indexed in leading reference services.

Besides the challenges of motivating hostile students with little educational background in an environment which does not reward learning, these educators often face the conflicts and incongruities within a system which does little to accommodate them. There are conflicts with custodial activities and security enforcement. At times, administrative level support is weak and there are severe fluctuations in educational program budgets. That the teacher turnover rate in correctional settings is as low as it is seems noteworthy.

Psychologically, what are these dedicated teachers like? What basic personality characteristics do they have in common? How do they view themselves? This is a study of correctional educators in Washington State. It is an attempt to understand more about positive educational results and personality changes brought about under adverse conditions and how caring is incorporated into correctional classrooms.

METHOD

The sample: Ninety correctional educators, serving in seven Washington prisons, constitute the sample. All were volunteer subjects employed as "instructors," each being full-time or part-time staff providing a minimum of two contact hours with students each week. The sample represented 70% of the combined instructional staffs of the seven institutions.

Demographic data on age, sex, and length of service in the correctional setting were noted. Assessment study tools were administered on the free time of the participants. All participants in the study were advised that the findings of the study would be held in strictest confidence, i.e., no names would be attached to any particular finding. This good faith commitment was built into the protocol and rigidly adhered to in all phases of the endeavor. The sample was composed of 37 females and 53 males.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell and Cattell) was administered to all participants. It is an instrument designed to identify the primary components of personality by factor-analyzing all English language adjectives describing behavior. The study was computer-scored by IPAT, the publisher.

The Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Rush, et al.) was also administered to all the participants. This tool is designed to assess the severity of depression in adolescents and adults. (Persons interested in further discussion of the assessment tools will find explanatory literature in their local libraries or they may wish to contact the Garrett Heyns Education Center, Shelton, Washington).

RESULTS

Demographics:

Age: The mean age for the 37 female instructors in the study is 46.4 years. For the 53 males, the mean age is 50.3 years. Forty-two percent of the teachers were 50 years of age or older. The youngest instructor was 31.

Length of Service: The mean length of service for the females is 4.9 years and for the males it is 8.3 years. The range in the years of service runs from 2 to 28 years.

Contact Hours: Seventy-six percent of the total sample have over 20 contact hours with the students per week.

The 16 PF Scales:

The Human Resource Development Report issued by the IPAT scoring service organizes the 16 PF personality dimensions into five categories. These are: (1) Leadership, (2) Interacting with Others, (3) Making Decisions, (4) Initiative, and (5) Personal Adjustment. This study uses the same categories to present the group results in this research.

It should be remembered that these categories are descriptions of personality characteristics. They do not necessarily relate to qualities suggesting adequacy of teachers. Instead it is left to the reader to decide if such characteristics are advantageous when found in the members of the teaching profession. One could evaluate these characteristics in light of the positive results teachers obtain in working with their students.

The following chart summarizes the numbers of teachers (and the percentage of the total sample they represent) who score at an "average" or above level in each category. The "average" level was determined through the administration of the test to many thousands of individuals. The results, when tabulated according to scientific formulae, can be viewed with comfort as truly representing an "average."

Category	Average N=90		Above Average N=90		Total N=90
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Leadership (*Dominance)	58	64	26	20	84
Interacting with Others (**Self-sufficient)	47	52	41	37	88
Making Decisions (***Creativity)	45	50	43	39	89
Initiative (****Independence)	57	63	14	20	83
Personal Adjustment (*****Trusting)	59	65	12	13	78

Note—While there are a number of scales in the several categories, only one, representative of the general reaction of the participants, was used in the above for illustrative purposes. The clarification below will suffice for this abstract; however, each of the several scales in each category is com-

pletely analyzed in the scientific version of the study and is available for further perusal by interested parties.

* Self assured, self assertive, independent minded, authoritarian

** Resourceful

*** High scholastic ability and mental capacity

**** Independent, daring, incisive, aggressive

***** Easy to get along with, accepting of conditions, trusting

Given the range of the categories and the significance of each in the matter of personality description, it is important to note the similarity as well as the high percentage of the survey group which falls into the "average" or above designation.

The Beck Depression Inventory:

The data from the research suggests that 14 of the teachers could be experiencing some degree of depression. An intensive review of the responses of these 14 teachers did, in fact, reveal that six were probably involved in a mild mood disturbance. Four others would be better described as suffering a mild clinical depression. The remaining four appeared asymptomatic.

Without the opportunity to examine directly the ten individuals showing depression, it is difficult to draw conclusions as to the meaning of this observation. Perhaps the depressive content in these instances suggests "burn out" even though there was no correlation between the "depression" and the length of service. Or, it could be that the instructors, sensitive, bright and self-assertive as they may be, had come to find it less than comfortable to work around the isolation and loneliness of the prison. They may find it difficult to tolerate the

less than comfortable to work around the isolation and loneliness of the prison. They may find it difficult to tolerate the many, many enigmatic rules; of course, the four percent depressed in this sample may be quite a low percentage as compared to teachers in other settings and/or professional groups.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study we have explored the question of what personality characteristics correctional educators have in common and how they see themselves. The work was accomplished because of a desire to learn who correctional educators really are. We have obtained some answers to that question.

Correctional educators are really quite down to earth, average people who are capable of coping with problems. They are bright, assertive, daring and aggressive. In fact, these latter characteristics provide the leadership role they play in the lives of their students. They are trusting individuals who find it easy to get along with others. And, perhaps most exciting of all, they are quite content to stick around for extended periods which has given them time to develop techniques for dealing with recalcitrant students under difficult circumstances and still enjoy the positive results of their efforts.

A Study of the Recidivism of Garrett Heyns Education Center Graduates Released Between 1985 and 1991

Chuck Kelso, M.Ed

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the rate of recidivism for graduates at the Garrett Heyns Education Center located at the Washington Corrections Center, Shelton, Washington. The subjects were diploma, vocational certificate and associate degree recipients who were released between January 1, 1985 and December 31, 1991 who had been released for no less than one year. The 1985, '86 and '87 releasees had potential for meeting the criterion of having survived five years at risk for recidivism.

The study subjects' recidivism was determined for the composite group of graduates. There were also determinations made for subgroups based on the type of credential earned. The results were compared to those of a study done by the Department of Corrections for the entire population of Washington State prison inmates released during the same time frame and were compiled using similar criteria.

The average recidivism for the three years where inmates faced a full five years at risk for the Department of Corrections study was 30.9%. The average recidivism for the Garrett Heyns composite group was 13.9%. The Garrett Heyns graduate recidivism is less than half that of the rate for the state as a whole. The 30.9% statewide rate for all released inmates is relatively low and due in part to the rehabilitative aspects of correctional education programs since the late 1960s. The 13.9% finding for Garrett Heyns graduates also compares very favorably with rates found in other studies for education programs in similar circumstances.

The sub-group recidivism averages for Garrett Heyns graduates were: high school diploma-only recipients, 19.4%; vocational

certificate recipients, 10.1% and associate degree recipients, 10.7%. These findings should interest the Department and the legislature when considering funding priorities within prison education program. These findings support the contention that specialized vocational and post-secondary education will better prepare inmates with skills and behavioral tools necessary to succeed upon release than general, basic skills alone. These findings also support the belief that the greater the length of exposure to education, its skills, critical thinking processes and behaviors necessary for achievement, the greater the socialization of the individual.

The dollars spent in prison education programs lower recidivism which result in unlimited potential for returns to the State and for society. The $25,000 plus cost per year for each individual who does not return to prison as a result of these programs represents a huge savings for the taxpayer. The dollar savings are an accompaniment to the realization of societal values characterized by responsible citizenship. The findings of this study raise important issues when formulating decisions regarding funding for correctional programs.

PURPOSE

This is a study of graduates from the Garrett Heyns Education Center located at the Washington Corrections Center (Shelton, Washington). It examines individuals released from incarceration beginning January 1, 1985 through December 31, 1991. It was undertaken to investigate how successfully the program's graduates are functioning upon release from the prison system. The criterion for success is the extent to which individuals released into society have not recidivated. For purposes of comparison, this study has adopted the time frame, assumptions and criteria for recidivism established by the Washington State Department of Corrections in a study of offenders released beginning in 1985 through 1991.[1]

Program Description and Philosophy

The Education Center is a branch campus of Centralia (Community) College located in Centralia, Washington. The Center's programs are designed to provide a broad spectrum of educational opportunities based on student needs consistent with the mission of the Washington State community college system. The components of this mission are: personal development opportunities, adult basic education, high school completion, the General Educational Development Certificate, vocational certification and vocational/academic community college degree programs providing career skills and four-year college transfer preparation.

The philosophical approach embraced in correctional education programming as practiced at the Education Center is based on two fundamental concepts. The first is that the acquisition of useful knowledge and skills is essential in the development and maintenance of appropriate and acceptable citizen participation. The second is that correctional education processes provide a therapeutic medium which addresses criminogenic needs. This is a necessary requisite for behavioral change where skills and knowledge become operant upon release. Educational programs conceived and practiced by correctional education professionals are therapeutic when a classroom instructor expects that students will undertake responsibility for their own education and success. This occurs in a positive environment where active supervision, example and leadership are provided.

Students are encouraged to learn decision-making skills, to take responsibility for the results of their decisions and actions, to practice and cultivate mutual respect for those with whom they interact, to accept diversity and to develop a

[1] Washington State Department of Corrections Planning and Research Section, *Recidivism Briefing Paper No. 1*, Washington State Department of Corrections: September, 1993.

healthy self-esteem and self-reliance. The premise is that improvements in inmate behavior developed during incarceration carry over upon release from custody. These philosophies are articulated in the Garrett Heyns mission statement and in a document entitled *Responsibilities of the Garrett Heyns Education Center* and are supported by the mission of the International Correctional Education Association and its Washington Correctional Education Association affiliate.[2]

Graduation from Garrett Heyns Education Center programs represent significant prison education experiences. In the context of corrections, training and the acquisition of skills is most valuable when accomplishment is accompanied by substantial attention to the holistic development of individuals. Responsible instructors design programs where curriculum and delivery methodologies are carefully balanced. Good teachers are not merely instructional machines. They are necessary agents for the interactive processes which accomplish educational goals and bring about behavioral change.

DISCUSSION

Debate over recidivism and its causes and cures has raged ever since the concept of rehabilitation in any form was introduced as an alternative to strictly punitive approaches to incarceration. It is curious that the most commonly used measure of the success of treatment programs is the relative level of ineffectiveness of the process of incarceration—recidivism. Here, the lower the percent, the better the treatment.

Studies on recidivism have often been plagued with unreconciled differences in populations, techniques and criteria. Consequently, the ability of investigators to draw conclusions based upon supportable evidence has been hampered. Even when researchers have based their conclusions on clear-

[2] These documents are available from the Garrett Heyns Education Center, PO Box 900, Shelton, WA 98584.

cut, scientifically significant findings, issues like that of self-selection have cast doubt on the validity of the findings.

Proponents of the self-selection theory contend that students who choose to go to school will recidivate less because they are individuals who already recognize and accept the need for growth and change, a self-fulfilling prophecy. If this premise were true, recidivism for individuals who recognize their own needs would be skewed lower even if they never stepped into a classroom. However, an alternative reality as observed by correctional instructors is that many students self-select school programs as an alternative to less attractive duty in prison work assignments, to try to impress prison authorities or for what they think will be an easy program. However, once faced with the rigor and challenges provided by well-designed education programs, it is the skill and positive influence of instructors that captures the imagination of students and *keeps* these individuals in the program.

Does the self-selection argument support Martinson's 1974 conclusion that "nothing works"?[3] If this is true, then we do not need education or any other rehabilitation programs in our prisons. However, the possible effects of several years of warehouse-type incarceration without the opportunities for change are frightening. Incarceration in this type of environment creates inmates suitable only for serving the needs of the institution. The basic needs of a warehousing institution are dramatically different than the needs of society; therefore, individuals develop in ways which do not meet society's criteria for reintegration.

Self-selecting inmates' desire to enter constructive programs would too often fail to survive several years of incarceration if unrequited. Furthermore, it seems unreasonable to

[3] R. Martinson, What Works? "Questions and Answers About Prison Reform." *The Public Interest*, Number 35, 1974, pp.22-54. This well-known, highly controversial study's conclusion is that in regard to treating criminality, essentially, "nothing works."

expect adult individuals who did not succeed in conventional education programs when they had the opportunity as youths to suddenly flourish in similarly designed programs after lengthy warehoused incarceration.

Since Martinson, there have been many studies which support the contention that some things *do work* and still others which are unable to show significant successes. Many of these studies were abstracted and summarized in 1995 by Steurer and Tracy.[4] In reviewing these abstracts and other studies in an attempt to discover what does work, one concludes that the reasons for success or failure are difficult to ascertain. Different programs in different contexts (e.g. juvenile, adult, secondary, post-secondary) succeed to varying degrees. Without the benefit of specific knowledge of the methods and philosophies employed, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions.

There is some evidence that it is not the technical nature of programs that are as important as the extent to which educational and other treatment programs are properly designed and prescribed. In the late 1980s, D. A. Andrews, et al. performed a meta-analysis on a substantial body of recidivism studies.[5] This meta-analysis employed criteria examining the nature of programs upon which the subject studies were based. The researchers characterized the programs as primarily criminal sanctioning, inappropriate correctional service, unspecified correctional service and appropriate correctional service. The study findings were reported in the form of correlation coefficients. "The effect of appropriate correctional service (mean phi=.30) was significantly ($p<.05$) greater than that

[4] Alice Tracy and Stephen Steurer, "Recidivism Study Summaries." Unpublished abstracts and comments provided by the International Correctional Education Association, Laurel, Maryland.

[5] D.A. Andrews, et al., "Does Correctional Treatment Work? A Clinically Relevant and Psychologically Informed Meta-Analysis." *Criminology*, The American Society of Criminology: Vol. 28, No. 3, August, 1990, pp. 369-404.

of unspecified correctional service (.13), and both were more effective than inappropriate service (-.06) and non-service criminal sanctioning (-.07)."[6] Although the study did not make any specific reference to correctional education treatment programs, it follows that if [illegible] programs are not created equally (i.e. if some lack compe[illegible]nts which address criminogenic needs both cognitively an[illegible]behaviorally), results in the form of reduced recidivism would not be reliable. These findings support the premise that experienced (both in educational and life experiences), knowledgeable and successful correctional educators must be involved in development and design of new programs and in the evaluation of existing programs.

It is necessary that studies on the effectiveness of correctional education programs employ increased rigor in controlling for variables which in the past have opened the door to doubts as to the validity of findings. As a body of credible evidence supporting the effectiveness of well-designed correctional education programs grows, researchers will be able to turn their attention to determining which characteristics of programs and staff are responsible for successful correctional education programs. Identification and recognition of these characteristics will be invaluable in establishing criteria for new program methods and curriculum design.

DEFINITIONS

Perhaps the most important step towards credibility for recidivism studies is a uniform basis in terms of definitions and variables used in their designs. Therefore, though the Department of Corrections 1993 study criteria may be contentious, they have been adopted for this study ensuring at least, an "apples to apples" comparison.

For this study, recidivism is defined as it was by the De-

[6] Ibid, p. 369.

partment of Corrections for its study:

> *. . . as the return to a Washington State adult correctional facility of an offender who had either paroled or been discharged from such a facility. Returns can be the result of new felony convictions or technical violations of parole conditions. Subsequent commitments to other correctional jurisdictions are not accounted for, nor are returns beyond five years at-risk.*[7]

The choice of a five year at-risk cutoff for recidivism is, perhaps, arbitrary. However, it seems reasonable that after five years, the community environment and its influences, good or bad, are more apt to affect behavior of a released felon than treatment received during incarceration. It may also be true that recidivism beyond five years is so low that it would not warrant the resources to study it. However, in order to make meaningful comparisons, this study will conform to the same definitions.

The Department of Corrections' Study Methods

The study after which this one is patterned is summarized in Recidivism Briefing Paper No. 1. The findings of the Department (Table 2, page 36) provide comparison data for this study. The Department used the electronic Offender Based Tracking System in order to discover which individuals released between 1985 and 1991, inclusive, were returned to the Washington State prison system as a result of incarceration from a new cause or technical violations of parole conditions.[8]

The briefing paper implies that it studied all individuals released in this time frame (n=20,472) including participants in its educational programs. The Department of Corrections indi-

[7] Op. Cit., Washington State Department of Corrections
[8] Ibid.

cates that historically, 40% of its inmates participate annually in its educational programs.[9] Though not specifically stated in the paper, the number released and recidivism figures for 1991 imply that these individuals were tracked for one full year after release. Likewise, it is assumed that 1990 releasees were tracked for two full years from release and so forth until we get to 1987, '86 and '85 releasees who were tracked for five full years.

It is the clear intention of the Department to use its findings and methods as a springboard to other studies. The Department states that its paper "is not intended to provide a strict measure of success for release, but it does provide descriptive baseline data which may be used for further studies."[10]

Study Methods and Population

A list of all graduates of the Garrett Heyns Education Center was drawn from July, 1975 when the program vendor became Centralia (Community) College through August, 1995. The number and distribution of graduates are displayed in Table 1.

Percent	Number	Credential
39.1%	992	GED Certificates
23.9%	606	High School Diplomas
25.4%	645	Vocational Certificates
4.7%	119	Vocational Degrees
7.0%	177	Academic Degrees
100.1%	2539	Totals

Table 1: Summary of GHEC Graduates from 7/1/75 through 8/31/95

The subjects of the study are graduates of the Garrett Heyns Education Center's programs who were released from

[9] Information provided by Ann Sweeney, Department of Corrections Educational Coordinator during a meeting of the *Secretary's Task Force on Offender Education*, of which the researcher was a member, September, 1994.
[10] Op Cit., Washington State Department of Corrections....

January 1, 1985 through December 31, 1991 (n=312). Absent from this pool of individuals were those known to be deceased (n=8), individuals who were incarcerated in Washington State as boarders from other jurisdictions (n=18)[11] and those who received their credentials more than 100 days after release (n=8)[12]. The Department study did not make reference to handling of these individuals. However, any skewing of the Department's findings as a result of not removing these individuals would likely have resulted in lower recidivism findings. This is true, at least in the instances of deceased and out-of-state boarders since return data would likely place them in the non-recidivist category.

The 1991 releasees were tracked up to one year beyond their release dates, 1990 releasees were tracked up to two years beyond their release dates and so forth until 1987, 86 and 85 where releasees could be tracked for a full five years and results could be matched with the findings of the Department. The subject individuals were graduates from high school completion programs, vocational certificate programs and/or community college degree programs. Recipients of the General Educational Development Certificate are considered an uncontrolled variable and were not included in the study. The concern is that substantial numbers of these individuals may have attained their credential with minimal or no exposure to Garrett Heyns classroom influences. For the remaining individuals, the supposition is that graduation from one or more

[11] Washington State has an on-going agreement with other states to "swap" or board inmates. A significant number of boarders from the Federal system were present during the mid-1980s. Since few of these individuals could be expected to take up residence in Washington State upon release and records of release and reincarceration are kept outside of this jurisdiction, it was decided to remove them from the study population.

[12] The decision to exclude individuals who petitioned back for their credentials more than 100 days after release was made more or less arbitrarily. However, it was deemed necessary to establish some reasonable cutoff since the circumstances behind the delayed completion of a program were unknown and in some cases made it impossible to fit individuals into the study's time frame.

programs provided them with exposure to the curriculum, procedures and other manifestations of the philosophies of the Garrett Heyns Education Center staff.

For purposes of the study, individuals were counted only once. If they received multiple credentials, they were counted by ascension from high school to vocational certificate through community college degree programs. The basis for this progression is that generally, vocational certificate recipients will likely have spent more time in school than high school recipients and degree recipients more than vocational. Recidivism was counted only once per individual based on the last return to custody subsequent to earning a credential.

Results and Comparisons

The results of this study are summarized in Tables 3-6. Table 3 shows the composite recidivism for the study population. Tables 4-6 show recidivism for those students who received a high school diploma only, vocational certificate recipients and associate degree graduates, respectively.

For the composite group (Table 3), 1985, '86 and '87, the three years where releasees had a full five years at risk, total recidivism was 11.1%, 19.6% and 10.9% respectively. The three year average for the group was 13.9%. The Department study (Table 2) for the same three years yielded 31.9%, 30.9% and 30.0%, respectively, averaging 30.9% for those three years. The average recidivism for the study group, therefore, is 55% lower than that for the Department's group. The Department reports that for the three years where the criterion of having had five years at risk is met "approximately thirty percent of all returning offenders did so within the first year of release."[13] In the Garrett Heyns study approximately 10 percent of all returning offenders released between 1985 and 1987 returned within the

[13] Op Cit., Washington State Department of Corrections

first year.

The Garrett Heyns high school sub-group (Table 4) for the three years where the five year at risk criterion was met yielded 21.4%, 25.0% and 11.8% total recidivism, respectively, averaging 19.4% recidivism. The vocational certificate group (Table 5) yielded 0%, 18.2% and 12.0% averaging 10.1% and the associate degree group (Table 6) yielded 10.0%, 14.3% and 7.7%, averaging 10.7% recidivism.

Table 2: Recidivism, 1985-1991 From the Washington State Department of Corrections Study

Release Year (# Released)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1985 (2,294)	10.2	9.4	4.7	4.2	3.4	31.9
1986 (2,654)	9.3	8.3	5.0	4.8	3.5	30.9
1987 (2,908)	8.8	8.5	6.5	3.7	2.5	30.0
1988 (3,237)	12.1	10.9	6.5	3.6		
1989 (2,869)	12.3	10.0	5.3			
1990 (3,222)	12.1	10.9				
1991 (3,288)	10.9					
Average	**10.9**	**9.7**	**5.7**	**4.0**	**3.1**	

Table 3: GHEC Graduate Composite Recidivism, 1985-1991

Release Year (# Released)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1985 (36)	2.8	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.1
1986 (56)	0.0	7.1	3.6	7.1	1.8	19.6
1987 (55)	1.8	1.8	3.6	3.6	0.0	10.9
1988 (61)	4.9	4.9	6.6	3.3		
1989 (41)	9.8	12.2	0.0			
1990 (31)	6.5	9.7				
1991 (32)	3.1					
Average	**4.1**	**7.3**	**2.8**	**3.5**	**0.6**	

Table 4: GHEC High School Graduate Recidivism, 1985-1991

Release Year (# Released)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1985 (14)	0.0	21.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.4
1986 (20)	0.0	10.0	5.0	10.0	0.0	25.0
1987 (17)	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.8	0.0	11.8
1988 (14)	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.0		
1989 (15)	6.7	13.3	0.0			
1990 (14)	7.1	7.1				
1991 (12)	0.0					
Average	**2.0**	**8.7**	**3.9**	**5.4**	**0.0**	

Table 5: GHEC Vocational Certification Recipient Recidivism, 1985-1991

Release Year (# Released)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1985 (12)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1986 (22)	0.0	9.1	4.5	0.0	4.5	18.2
1987 (25)	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	12.0
1988 (29)	10.3	6.9	0.0	3.4		
1989 (16)	12.5	18.8	0.0			
1990 (13)	0.0	15.4				
1991 (16)	6.3					
Average	**4.7**	**9.0**	**1.7**	**0.9**	**1.5**	

Table 6: GHEC College Degree Recipient Recidivism, 1985-1991

Release Year (# Released)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1985 (10)	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
1986 (14)	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.0	14.3
1987 (13)	0.0	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0	7.7
1988 (18)	0.0	5.6	11.1	5.6		
1989 (10)	10.0	0.0	0.0			
1990 (04)	25.0	0.0				
1991 (04)	0.0					
Average	**6.4**	**0.9**	**3.8**	**5.0**	**0.0**	

The Garrett Heyns graduate recidivism is less than half of that found by the Department. This is a significant finding, consistent with conclusions of other investigators.

The Washington State Department of Corrections has been aggressive in providing sophisticated, community college based educational programs in all of its major institutions for at least 20 years. Its overall 30.9% recidivism rate would compare quite favorably with that of other jurisdictions.

There is a feature of the Department's study population which conservatively skewed the recidivism differences between it and the Garrett Heyns population. The Department's study included inmates who had received educational treatment. Approximately 40% of all inmates participate in educational programs while incarcerated, many of whom earn educational credentials. Consequently, it is fair to conclude that if individuals who earn credentials recidivate at a 55% lower rate, the recidivism rate for the Department's remaining population would be substantially higher.

It is interesting that Garrett Heyns high school graduates' average recidivism is nearly double that of the vocational and associate degree groups' rates. There is considerable debate over the best allocation of scarce programming resources in prisons. Sympathy runs high for establishing priorities placing adult basic education and high school completion programs ahead of vocational and community college degree programs. It is recommended that more extensive studies of the recidivism of education subgroups be undertaken before hastening to significantly reduce funding of some programs in favor of others.

The finding that Garrett Heyns graduate recidivism in the first year is 10% of the total recidivism compared with that of the Department group's 30% further supports the conten-

tion that the influence of education on graduates carries over upon release.

One premise for the correctional education professional is that the processes, examples and techniques which are uniquely employed in correctional education are at least as responsible for success of its students as the credentials conferred. When substantiated, it is fair to conclude that any individual who spends significant lengths of time in correctional education programs will be as positively affected as one who receives credentials. The investment by the State in correctional education programs can be shown to be very cost effective. The average cost for keeping an individual incarcerated in an adult prison facility in this state is over $25,000 a year. Approximately 4% of prison budgets are allocated to provide correctional education. It is not difficult to project that hundreds of individuals spending many fewer years each in these institutions result in many millions of dollars in savings. Other benefits are manifested in decreased welfare costs, lower property losses, salvaged family units and reduced pain and suffering by those who would otherwise be victims.

The classroom processes at the Garrett Heyns Education Center are having positive impacts on the lives of its students. Since virtually all of these individuals had much the same opportunity to participate in free public education programs as other individuals, we need to study what is different about prison education which contributes to the successes of its participants. Much can be inferred from the underlying philosophies and practices of experienced correctional education professionals.

Studies conducted for the purpose of creating a body of information identifying successful methodologies used in the correctional education environment will be invaluable for use in teacher education and staff training programs for correctional practitioners. This information would also provide

guidance for program administrators while choosing correctional education program vendors and personnel.

It is further recommended that studies utilizing population criteria and procedures consistent with those used by the Department and this study be undertaken at other institutions and in other jurisdictions.

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An Analysis of Recidivism Rates for Inmates Completing Vocational/Academic Programs at Twin Rivers Corrections Center/Edmonds Community College (1984-1995)

Jerry Haynes, M.Ed.

Since 1984, Edmonds Community College (EdCC) has offered college level vocational and academic programs at Twin Rivers Corrections Center (TRCC). Inmates may earn two-year associate of technical arts (ATA) degrees and/or one-year technical certificates in the areas of office administration, computer repair/electronics, and graphic arts. In addition, they may earn the non-transferable associate of general studies (AGS) degree and/or the post-secondary transferable associate of arts and sciences (AAS) degree. In the past eleven years, over 150 students have completed these degrees or certificates.

As part of this analysis, during April, 1995, the Correctional Records Manager at TRCC used the Offender Based Tracking System (OBTS) to track the current status of all EdCC/TRCC graduates. Inmates were identified by three categories: first, those inmates who were released from prison and have not returned; second, those inmates who were released but have returned to prison because they reoffended or violated the terms of their community placement; and third, those inmates who have completed degrees and have not yet been released.

Of the 152 EdCC graduates, 93 have been released to the community while 59 remain incarcerated. The following data focuses on the 93 graduates released.

The recidivism rates for students who completed associate degrees and those who completed certificates only, 9.1% and 14.8% respectively, are quite low when compared with

Recidivism Rate for EdCC Graduates				
Level of Education	Released from prison following education	Remain out of prison	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
Completed Degree (ATA, AGS, AAS)	66	60	6	9.1%
Completed Vocational Certificate Only	27	23	4	14.8%
Combined	93	83	10	10.8%

other studies of recidivism that reveal recidivism rates of fifty percent or greater. These results support the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics' claim that offenders who leave prison having achieved an academic or vocational degree are less likely to recidivate than their counterparts who leave with little or no college experience.

Of the 150+ graduates since 1984, fifteen percent completed multiple degrees, making analysis of any one program difficult. The following charts review the recidivism figures for inmates who have achieved certificates and/or degrees. In the second chart, those inmates who completed multiple degrees are cross-listed in each area, inflating the numbers slightly.

Inmates who achieve educational goals at Edmonds Community College/Twin Rivers Corrections Center maintain low recidivism rates after release. Greater educational achievement significantly reduces the rate of recidivism. Reduced recidivism rates mean substantial savings for Washington's taxpayers, as well as an increased self-supporting workforce.

House Bill 2010, passed by the 1995 Washington State

Inmates Completing One-Year Certificate Only			
Certificate	Number Released	Number Returned	Recidivism Rate
Graphic Arts	11	2	18.2%
Computer/ Electronics	13	2	15.4%
Office Admin.	3	0	0.0%
Total	27	4	14.8%

Inmates Completing Two-Year Degrees (includes multiple degrees)			
Major	Number Released	Number Returned	Recidivism Rate
Graphic Arts	30	1	3.3%
Computer/ Electronics	18	3	16.7%
Office Admin.	10	1	10.0%
Academic	28	4	14.3%

Associate Degree by Category			
Major	Number Released	Number Returned	Recidivism Rate
Graphic Arts	26	1	3.8%
Computer/ Electronics	6	1	16.7%
Office Admin.	3	0	0.0%
Multiple	16	2	12.5%
Academic	15	2	13.3%
Total	66	6	9.1%

Legislature, represents an effort to reduce recidivism. However, a portion of this bill mandates that offenders pay for associate degrees. This mandate sets up a class system in prison that precludes most inmates from the very level of education that does, in fact, impact recidivism rates. Requiring inmates to pay a fee for their education may issue a death knell for those programs that significantly reduce recidivism. The nominal savings to taxpayers today will most surely represent a substantial increase in spending in the future.

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An Open Letter: A Curriculum Guide for Correctional Educators

To: Curriculum Committees, Institutions of Higher Learning, Educators Who Wish To Become Involved in The Subspecialty of Correctional Education, Trainees In The Education Field Who Are Interested In Correctional Education.

From: An Informal Committee of Volunteers Who Have Considered The Training Needs For Teachers Specializing in Correctional Education.

As correctional education has become more highly specialized and the field better understood as a subspecialty in the broad field of education, greater attention has been given to the training needs of individuals considering correctional education as a career specialty. It is encouraging to note that some institutions of higher learning are considering special curricula to meet such training needs.

With the enhancement of the professional position of the field as evidenced by the interest in training for such services, individuals in the community college system serving the teaching needs of the State of Washington were asked to express themselves as to what subject matter should be included in the training for correctional education as a specialty. The following is an edited consensus representing the thoughts and feelings of individuals who responded to the inquiry.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. It goes without saying that correctional educators need to be well grounded in their respective fields as well as the history, theory and teaching techniques which are incorporated in the curriculum of teacher training programs in the universities and colleges across the country.

2. Courses in psychology which go beyond the "psychology of human behavior" are essential. Specifically, there needs to be inserted into the curriculum the psychology of the dysfunctional family, a study of the response to rejection and poverty and perhaps even greater emphasis on the matter of children growing to their chronological maturity without the parental presence, guidance or leadership so essential to the development of a value system. One need only take a casual look at the individuals coming to correctional education programs to understand this need.

3. Guidance and counseling courses which emphasize self understanding and the techniques for helping students acquire such understanding should be very helpful to the teacher in the corrections setting. Many students who act out against their society are totally unaware of their feelings which, when released, get them into trouble.

4. Courses in sociology would provide a basic understanding of gang behavior, the dependency on firearms, prejudice and a non-caring attitude which too often has replaced a sense of responsibility to others.

5. Substance abuse and its meaning is an important field for the teacher to master. Along with such study is the need for the teacher to be informed of the organic brain changes which accompany long term abuse of drugs and alcohol. These changes are no longer debatable and the teacher needs to know and recognize that the lethargy, judgment defects and inability to cope have in some instances, an organic cause.

6. Considering the larger number of minorities from a variety of nationalities, it is important that the teacher in correctional settings be aware of cultural differences he/she may encounter in the classroom. It is not unusual for an

understanding of a student's cultural background to be the first step in developing a rapport with that student.

7. Mythology is still another useful tool, the knowledge of which is often helpful to the correctional educator. Myths have emerged from historical (or personal) events of such deep significance as to be remembered through stories illustrating them. In addition, the interpretation of the myths captures the element of truth which is present in all human experience. To be able to interpret the student's behavior, feelings, and even stress by recalling mythical stories is to reveal to the students that theirs is not a new problem or concern. Their experiences and anxieties are part of universal human experience. The seven steps in the creation of the mythic hero are extremely useful in intervention as students realize that they are not the first to confront experiences and feelings of isolation and loneliness (Joseph Campbell).

8. A high-level, professional education class examining the seven basic learning styles of students is extremely helpful. Recent research has revealed that there are several different learning styles; yet our culture seems to measure only a few (Howard Gardner and Linda Campbell). Communications, mathematics, and kinetic ability are measured, while other basic intelligences are not. As instructors become aware of the differences in individual learning styles, it is useful to inventory each student to discover the optimum way for them to learn.

The thoughts presented here represent scores of years of cumulative correctional education experience. As such, they provide a strong foundation of principles upon which curriculum planners can rely as they design programs targeted for those interested in a career in correctional education.

Civilizing the Visigoths: Education In A Prison Classroom

Warren Clare, Ph.D.

"Civilization Is Only One Generation Removed From Savagery"

On a recent afternoon, I stood before a class of 25 students and led a discussion on the goals of an education. They knew that the conduct of their lives violated the boundaries established by our culture, boundaries which they could not understand, which they had never learned or which they chose to ignore. Immediately in front of me was a Hells Angel. Beside him, was a member of the Gypsy Jokers, a Northwest motorcycle club. They found a commonalty in their love for Harley Davidson motorcycles. Scattered throughout the class were several Blacks, two from the Eastern Seaboard and two from the inner city of Detroit. Another was a bright young man from Jamaica. There was also a Skinhead from the American Nazi movement, a young Indian fisherman from the Quinault Reservation and a Tlingit Indian from the Alaskan coast who had somehow become addicted to drugs. In the room were two men from the South Seas and at least four from South and Central America. Other students were white, middle-class. Virtually each group represented is a traditional prison enemy to the others.

Looking over this group, I was reminded of the Visigoths who defeated a large portion of Roman rule. They didn't follow the rules of convention just as these men had violated the boundaries of our own social order. Standing there, conducting a serious group discussion, I felt like a kind of pre-historic priest.

If it is not race, place of origin, religion or background

that separates these students from each other; certainly their crime segregates them very clearly and defines what they are to the entire inmate population. The contract murderer seems to have the greatest respect while the two mentally ill men on heavy medications are definitely near the bottom of the ladder, just one rung above the sex offenders. Most of the men are incarcerated for narcotics related offenses. Many of them are gang members.

The subjects talked about in the classroom are very important to an understanding of the things that are wrong with America itself. For instance, I believe that this nation, and the world, cannot afford poverty. Without proper nutrition, proper pre-natal care, an opportunity for a decent quality of life, we guarantee that our prisons will be filled with frustrated, angry young people who do not even know they are products of indifference; they only know that somehow they do not seem to fit. The cost of poverty will bankrupt us all and waste uncounted human resources.

To be able to introduce young people, whatever their background, to a whole new way of seeing themselves—an entirely new set of expectations—is very satisfying. Inmates must first elect to take classes before any meaningful change can take place. Even if they are just avoiding yard duty, kitchen responsibilities or laundry assignments—it makes no difference—the results are still the same. Students on the streets are hardly motivated by more mature thinking. For a prison instructor, however, the challenge is to make learning so interesting, so worthwhile, so enjoyable that the students elect to stay and learn because it is exciting, interesting, fun and incredibly valuable.

The first element to be established in the prison classroom is a professional but cordial atmosphere. Men who are survivors of the streets in North America are masters at discovering insincerity, fear, dislike and prejudice. When they

understand that instructors are sincere in responsibilities to the classroom, students live up to expectations. Perhaps it is a human quality that gives them an opportunity to learn—the need to please, to be recognized for good performance. The mentorship that develops may be the first sincere human relationship these men have ever achieved. They want to please us if they can, and so they learn. But that happens only if respect for their teacher has been established.

"And what is the function of an education?" Members of the class eye each other. They have heard questions like this before. They know that there may be far more depth here than any of them have ever imagined.

"Well," a Samoan student ventures, "at some time down the line, we'll need to get a job and start our lives." Absolutely. One of the purposes of an education is to provide the training, the skills and the abilities to compete in the job market. Education throughout America has put its emphasis upon just that thought. We teach job skills, but not thinking and communications skills or problem-solving. We teach job-entry abilities. But is that all we should do? Is our mission simply to train people for a job market? Are instructors only master tradesmen bringing up apprentices who will one day fill their shoes and pay into the social security that they hope to draw? If learning were that simple, it would be very easy to live in this world.

An education, according to Thomas Carlyle, is defined as the development of a "sympathetic fellow feeling." He goes on to discuss human compassion. Other scholars wrestle with the meaning of a liberal arts education and come up with notions like: "An education is the development of gentlemen and ladies." I take that to mean it helps to create manners, cordiality, courtesy and a fabric of ethics that is necessary in the maintenance of civilization.

In the last five years, according to the F.B.I., crime has

dropped ten percent; within the same five year period; network news and published media has increased its coverage of crime six and one-half times. It is this increased coverage that has led to an angry mood in the public that demands harsh penalties, "hard time for armed crime," and severe punishment for felons. Oh, these men deserve to be in prison. Through the "felony gate," they have earned the need to be there. Since 90% will be back on our streets within five years, however, it must be recognized that we have a window of time to deal with individuals who ordinarily would never be sitting in a classroom and never make significant behavioral changes.

Experience has taught us that if we treat human beings with harshness, we create harsh individuals. If we treat people with indifference, we create insensitivity and indifference. The entire body of American literature teaches us that human beings are constantly changing as a result of their experiences.

And if individuals move into a prison setting, it is a certainty that they will continue to learn and to change. If they spend time only with bitter and disruptive individuals, it is certain that they will begin to adopt the attitudes from the experiences of those around them. If we present them with models of decorum, a measure of respect and dignity, we have an opportunity to develop an effective, even respectful, human being regardless of the transgressions that have led to imprisonment. Parents discover that children become mirrors of family actions and attitudes. And when youngsters leave the family, they mirror the values of the group in which they find themselves. The experience is a continuing process of conditioning. We can send felons to "crime college" or we can intervene with a college of our own that promotes our culture and preserves our civilization.

The Samoan, an inner-city Northwest Black, the Gypsy Joker and the Skinhead are made into a team. The entire class is broken down into units of four. They choose a spokesman

who must report to the class. A second team member must indicate the primary ideas presented in the essay or case study they are assigned. A third must analyze the implications of the essay to the 1990s and the fourth must collate the paragraphs provided by the first three and provide a conclusion. The exercise forces students to work together in order to reach a meaningful product. Each paragraph of the group paper has an identifiable author; and, the assignment is very difficult. As the studies continue, responsibilities within the units are shifted.

Out of it all, students learn to work together, to share efforts, to communicate effectively and to produce a final work approved by the team. Everyone contributes. Everyone has a personal responsibility. Each group has a responsibility and everyone is engaged. Learning takes place that goes far beyond the subject matter.

Forced cooperation creates boundaries of acceptable action, the absolute need to work together in order to survive the new challenge in their lives—the classroom. Literature teaches us that conflict between opposing forces is the essence of human experience which leads to human change. The conflict in a prison classroom is really human challenge to men who have never faced such a learning situation. All of their lives, these students have been educational failures. If it weren't for prison, they would never be in a classroom. But they try to rise to the level of the instructor's expectations.

It is apparent from the headlines of any newspaper in America that there are active elements completely anomalous to our civilization. Crime in the street, drive-by shootings, loss of family relationships, greater numbers of self-willed young people who rebel against family discipline—these are the new Visigoths. These are the barbarians who have not learned responsibility, who understand only hate and hurt and anger.

Within the last decade, the world has been cauterized by

brush-fire wars, revolutions that have taken thousands of lives, the loss of trust in governments and the fall of public figures we had been taught to respect. We have become jaded with human suffering, impervious to our own feelings; we have built layer upon layer of callousness around our human sensitivity.

To remind us of the depth to which mankind has sunk, the media continues to bring us stories of depravity, ugliness and man's inhumanity to mankind. As these touch us, the media brings even more brutal stories to the public. It is no wonder that our civilization shudders in fear of those who do not follow the rules.

Theodosius the First brought the disruptive and warlike Visigoths into the Empire by treating them sensitively, not with brutality. He allowed them to settle, to accept Rome's standards and to become a part of the established empire. They did so joyfully, though they had to learn a great deal. In only a few years, Visigoths lost the strong Roman leader who gave them a place in the structure, allowing them to live within the boundaries of law. When Theodosius died, his weak sons treated the Visigoths with callousness. And they embarked upon a reign of plunder and destruction. In their warfare, they followed no rules. If it is true that history repeats itself, can we do any less than Theodosius? Will we civilize the "New Visigoths" or treat them ruthlessly? We have the opportunity. Will we be wise enough to take it?

"Hey Doc," the Samoan asks, "is this education stuff kind of like learning to work together?"

These students will never know that they are part of a massive experiment in the liberal arts. The idea is that all human beings respond to an awakening of their humanity when given an opportunity to enrich their lives. It is not possible to study the best that the human race has said, thought, written or done without a decisive impact upon the psyche, without

developing perception, thoughtfulness, articulation. Students who spend years in reading and discussing, writing and thinking about the great issues of history and humanities, literature and communications, drama and art, will find that their values undergo change. Even the hardest and most truculent individuals respond if they allow themselves to undertake the study seriously. To withhold education from such individuals fosters social decay.

Some prisons are now providing education only to the eighth grade level. Are individuals somehow able to cope in a sophisticated world with only a middle school education? The more education all members of our society receive, the more effective civilization will be. Education at all levels is not just the establishment of a new paradigm or a new moral structure for individuals. It is a tool for personal change, hope, and a palliative for the problems that bombard us from the media.

Teaching is far more than just a career. Teachers are the primary instruments for civilizing society and are the advocates for our humanity. Education is the only hope for our state, our nation, and the dignity of mankind. Every teacher is a kind of pre-historic priest bringing civilization, culture and propriety to the world. Every student in every prison school is a kind of Visigoth.